

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hotel Washington

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 515 15th Street, NW not for publication N/A
city or town Washington vicinity X
state District of Columbia code DC zip code 20004 county N/A code N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Shirley Cross 3/1/95
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
(See continuation sheet).
- determined eligible for the
National Register
(See continuation sheet).
- determined not eligible for the
National Register
- removed from the National Register

Edson H. Beall 3/30/95

other (explain): _____

Entered in the
National Register

for Signature of Keeper

Date
of Action

=====
5. Classification
=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

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8. Statement of Significance
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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1917-1920

Significant Dates 1918

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation _____

Architect/Builder Hastings, Thomas

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- Previous documentation on file (NPS)
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 - previously listed in the National Register
 - previously determined eligible by the National Register
 - designated a National Historic Landmark
 - recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # DC 317
 - recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

- Primary Location of Additional Data
- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>18</u>	<u>323640</u>	<u>4307090</u>	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>					

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Eve Lydia Barsoum / Architectural Historian
organization D.C. SHPO date February 24, 1995
street & number 614 H Street, NW, Room 305 telephone (202) 727-7360
city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20001

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

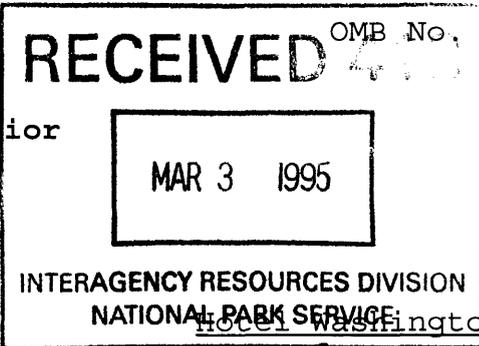
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Property Owner
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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Gal-Tex Corporation c/o Hotel Washington
street & number 1434 F Street, N.W. telephone _____
city or town Washington, DC state D.C. zip code 20004

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.



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The Hotel Washington building is situated at the intersection of 15th and F Streets and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, directly across from the U.S. Treasury Building and one block east of the White House, on a sloped, trapezoidal site. The building was constructed between 1917 and 1920. The design derives from the Italian Renaissance palazzo prototype. The building has an E-shape plan with closed sides facing the streets. The building is fourteen bays wide on 15th Street, eleven bays wide on F Street, and six bays wide on Pennsylvania. The main block has eight stories with two set-back attic stories. The principal facade is on 15th Street. The building has a steel frame with limestone and buff-color brick veneers. The two-story base is limestone with large arch-head and rectangular-head windows. The upper floors are brick and have single and pairs of rectangular-head windows. The upper stories are enlivened by large, ornate, brown and cream sgraffito (incised plaster) panels. The edifice is crowned by a cornice proportional to the eight-story main block.

The sloping site allows for a partially exposed basement which is accessible by an areaway. Light reaches the basement windows by a sloping areaway which begins at the east corner of the Pennsylvania Avenue elevation and extends for most of 15th Street; fourteen stairs are located at the corner which allows for a fully exposed basement on the street side. The rounded corner has limestone quoins. The areaway is surrounded by an iron railing with decorative posts. The base consists of smooth-cut limestone set in horizontal courses with deep joints.

The main arched entrance on 15th Street occupies two bays. The pairs of doors (not original) are flanked a pair of stone columns. The columns, one-half the height of the arched opening, support an entablature which is surmounted by an ornate iron marquee. The round-arch window is surrounded by rusticated voussoirs and a keystone with a grotesque figure. Flanking the entrance are alternating large round-arch and smaller rectangular windows, the arrangement suggests a central triumphal arch framed by Palladian windows. The arched window surrounds are simple cyma curves, whereas the rectangular windows have frames with sill and cornices supported by consoles. The second floor windows, located at the top of the base, have one-over-one double hung sashes. The base is capped by a heavy beltcourse extending from the top of the second floor windows to the sill of the third floor windows.

The Palladian-like opening pattern is used along the eleven bays of the F Street base. The ninth opening (rectangular) incorporates a pair of doors framed by columns which support an entablature, above which is an iron marquee; the doors lead to the hotel lobby. The seventh opening (rectangular) incorporates a pair of doors to the Two Continents Restaurant. The third bay is surmounted by a triangular pediment; the opening was the original entrance to the Two Continents-- it has been replaced by a window. The first bay was originally used as a staff entrance; it is currently used for service.

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The Pennsylvania Avenue base is six bays wide. There are three small basement entrances; a public entrance with a small ornamental iron marquee is located in the second bay. The main floor window pattern incorporates a rectangular window at the first and sixth bays which surround four arched windows.

The third through seventh stories are clad in buff-color brick with limestone quoins which do not alternate. Limestone stringcourses are located between the fourth and fifth and the fifth and sixth stories. The third and fourth floor openings incorporate pairs of one-over-one double-hung windows. On the 15th Street facade, there are four wrought iron decorative balconies beneath the third floor windows which are coupled with limestone keystones above the fourth floor windows. All of the windows on these two floors are linked by sgraffito surrounds and spandrels. The sgraffito recall the mosaics and stucco decoration of sixteenth-century Italian villas. The fifth-floor openings incorporate one-over-one double hung windows without surrounds. The windows and sgraffito of the third and fourth floors are repeated on the sixth and seventh floors. The eighth floor single windows are surrounded by the most complex sgraffito decoration.

The sgraffito decoration is cream colored on a reddish-brown ground. The designs include swags, garlands, fruit bunches in pendants, grotesque masks, griffins, urns, and ribbon bows. The sgraffito at the eighth floor functions as a large frieze which incorporates alternating octagonal and round medallions which contain portraits of Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Lincoln, Milton, Shakespeare, as well as Renaissance men.

The cornice projects above the eighth floor. In the palazzo tradition its projection is proportionate to the entire building. The cornice is supported by closely spaced brackets with deep bracket extensions with scrolled ends.

The ninth floor is a modest attic story with unadorned brick walls. The tenth floor is substantially set back from the 15th Street facade. Its design incorporates a series of French doors which open to a large terrace with a canvas awning supported by the original iron poles with lights. Rising above the tenth floor is a three-bay elevator penthouse with three windows at the center.

Interior

The lobby is almost the full width of the 15th Street elevation. The elevator banks are at the center, on axis with the main entrance on Fifteenth Street. The lobby features an arcade, a freestanding, marble and brass registration desk, and

¹ The interior walls of many 16th century Italian villas incorporate reinterpretations of the recently discovered Golden House of Nero, 1st century A.D. See: Raphael's Villa Madama, Rome, 1516 ff. and Peruzzi's Villa Farnesina, Rome, 1509-1511.

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an oval staircase--extending from the basement to the mezzanine. It has a wrought iron railing and is surmounted by a skylight.

The arcade reiterates the arched windows on the exterior. There are sculptured panels over the rectangular windows, which are framed by double Corinthian pilasters, supporting an architrave and frieze which is set beneath the cornice with modillions which is used around the entire lobby.

At the Pennsylvania Avenue side of the lobby lies the Park View Room and along the F Street side is the Two Continents Restaurant. Behind the public areas at the center of the hotel is the hotel kitchen. The Park View Room was built in 1974. This room was originally the main restaurant of the hotel, it was originally a double height space. The Two Continents Restaurant was restored in 1987. The decorative paintings on the ceiling and exterior walls are original.

Guest rooms are on the second through the ninth floors; the hotel numbers them as thee through ten. Most of the 360 hotel rooms were rehabilitated in 1986-1987. The original room configurations were retained except for changes required at the east rear where, due to the construction of an adjoining building. The guest rooms are relatively small and plain. Old photos depict ceiling fans, which were largely replaced with air conditioning in 1940.

Suites are located at the two main corners of the building. They include circular vestibules on the Pennsylvania Avenue corner and oval vestibules on the F Street side. Only suite 806 has embellished architectural details; it is believed to be the original hotel owner's apartment. The suite features large rooms with a fireplace in the parlor with a marble hearth and mantel and a cast-iron fireback. The bedroom has a ceiling with exposed beams and a large, cedar-lined closet.

The original terrazzo and tile floors in the halls have been covered with carpet. The small elevator lobby on each floor has a raised ceiling. The hall ceilings were lowered in 1957 to accommodate mechanical and electrical equipment.

On the tenth floor are a pair of large meeting rooms and a large, rooftop terrace. The hallway wall is comprised of French doors. On the north side is the Washington Ballroom, which has an ornate beamed ceiling. In 1969, the large windows that faced F Street were infilled. The windows on the south side of the room were infilled at an unknown date. Another meeting room, with plain decorations, has large windows which overlook Pennsylvania Avenue and 15th Street; the windows along the north side have been infilled.

The Hotel Washington has been well cared for since its opening in 1918 and has received no major changes to the exterior except for replacement of doors in 1953 and replacement of windows in 1975. In the 1960s, a renovation was undertaken in which the lobby and other public areas in the hotel were refurbished to conform to current tastes. A 1974 renovation included the insertion of a mezzanine at the southern end of the lobby. Ceilings were dropped and modern lighting installed

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throughout the hotel. In 1986-1987 the hotel was thoroughly restored in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The most notable accomplishment of the rehabilitation was the restoration of the sgraffito decoration. The Hotel Washington is included in the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site and in the Fifteenth Street Financial Historic District.

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The Hotel Washington occupies one of the most prominent privately owned sites in Washington, with three important street frontages, two of which are on the ceremonial way between the U.S. Capitol and the White House. This extraordinary location provided its architect with an unique site to build a landmark. The hotel was designed by the nationally prominent New York firm of Carrere and Hastings. It is the only commercial building designed by the firm in the city and is a tangible representation of a commercial edifice built to uphold the ideas of the American Renaissance.

Carrere & Hastings

Hotel Washington was designed in 1917-1918 by the New York architectural firm of Carrere and Hastings, under the direction of Thomas Hastings.² John Mervin Carrere (1858-1911) and Thomas Hastings (1860-1929) met in Paris, as students at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. When they returned to the United States, they joined the New York firm of McKim, Mead & White, the best training office at the time; Carrere in 1882 and Hastings in 1884. In 1885, the two young draftsmen started their own firm with an important commission from Henry Flagler, a railroad magnate and Florida promoter. They quickly gained prominence as exponents of the Beaux Arts tradition. As prolific as they were talented, by the time of Carrere's death they were ranked as equals with their former employers.

Among Carrere and Hastings' best known works are the New York Public Library (1911); fourteen Carnegie libraries; the Life Building (1893) and the Knoebler Galleries in New York; the Ponce de Leon and Alcazar Hotels in St. Augustine, Florida; and the Jefferson Hotel (1897) in Richmond, Virginia. In Washington, their buildings include the Townsend Mansion (1900), now the Cosmos Club; the original House and Senate Office Buildings (1905-08) and; the Carnegie Institution at 1530 P Street, NW (1906). The firm also designed the Arlington Memorial Amphitheater (1920). Although most of their designs derived from French sources, they were equally adept with other styles. This is particularly clear at the beginning of their partnership. Their early hotel commissions illustrate their skill with the Spanish Colonial Revival style.

The design of the Hotel Washington follows the principles underlying the American Renaissance.³ In the foreword of American Renaissance Michael Botwinick

² John M. Carrere died in an automobile accident in 1911. The firm continued to operate under the joint name until Hasting's death in 1929.

³ For a general overview of the American Renaissance see: Richard Guy Wilson, The American Renaissance 1876-1917. Brooklyn, NY: Pantheon Books, 1979.

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summarized the ideology that prevailed at the turn-of-the-century, "It was the artistic community that elevated the sights of the period that informed the young culture that it was not some rough frontier society...that America was...unique..a new society based on science, industry, commerce, rational order, democracy...and was the legitimate heir to the concept of the Renaissance." The conservative, i.e. Classical, art and architecture of the time which delighted in ornamental richness projected an image of culture and civilization. American artists, architects, politicians, financeers, and industrialists saw themselves as the heirs and final prodigy of the European Renaissance. Originally identifications were made between themselves and the leaders of the Italian Renaissance, but as time passed correlations were made with the French and English Renaissance of the sixteenth- through eighteenth-centuries and with the American leaders of the late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries. In short, the use of the Italian Renaissance palazzo as the prototype for the Hotel Washington represents a direct tie to the past. The use of sgraffito on the hotel also establishes the America building as an Italian hier. But the most overt associations with the past are the octagonal and round medallions which depict important Renaissance figures.

Construction

Construction of the Hotel Washington began in 1917 on the trapezoidal corner lot that was formerly the site of the Corcoran Office Building (1875-1917). The Corcoran building, erected by financier W.W. Corcoran, was a six-story Renaissance Revival building which filled the entire block and housed studios for much of Washington's art community. In December 1916 the property was acquired by deed from William Corcoran Eustis by the National Hotel Corporation and razed in January 1917. The site, which had always been a popular location for viewing parades on Pennsylvania Avenue, was cleared and bleachers were erected for Woodrow Wilson's inaugural parade on March 5, 1917. Construction for the hotel began shortly after the inauguration.

Because of its location, the plans for the hotel were subject to review by the recently created U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. Although a contemporary newspaper account reported that the plans submitted to the Commission, in which Hastings was a member, were returned to the architects to create a more harmonious decorative exterior. However, the Commission's minutes do not reflect this criticism. In April of 1917, the Commissioners of the District of Columbia requested guidance from the Commission of Fine Arts concerning the hotel's tenth story. Questions concerned was whether the set-back parapet wall was permissible under the height limitations act of 1910, which aimed at regulating the height of buildings on blocks immediately adjacent to public buildings, and whether the proposed rooftop "pergola" and accompanying structures violated the special setback regulations for 15th Street between Psnnsylvania Avenue and G Street, which was designed to protect the Treasury building. The Fine Arts Commission noted that "the additional story occupies a space well within the permissible height of a mansard roof" and was, moreover, "for appearance sake much to be preferred to a mansard roof," such as those used on the nearby Riggs National Bank and Metropolitan Bank buildings. The Commission further found that the pergola-like structure was

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"calculated to add to the appearance of the skyline of the building, and that the height to which the building has been carried, including its pergola, is much less than the permissible height on Pennsylvania Avenue and F Street." The Commission concluded by recommending approval of the features.

When the question of marquises for the F and 15th Street entrances came before the Commission of Fine Arts in July of 1918, they were less enthusiastic. "The designs were not considered in harmony with the building itself, and out of harmony with the Treasury building and with the character of new construction along 15th Street generally." The objection apparently hinged on the proposed erection of supporting posts on the sidewalk, a practice the Commission had consistently opposed. As built, the ornamental iron marquises are suspended from wires attached to the facade.

The Hotel Washington incorporates the most extensive use of sgraffito in Washington. Sgraffito is traditionally attributed to unnamed Italian artists. A January 1913 article in The Architectural Record suggests that it could have been executed by an artist named Menconi who used the medium to decorate the entire storefront facade of a small Carrere and Hastings project at 548 Fifth Avenue in New York City.

Based on photographs taken during construction, it is likely that the builders were the contracting firm of Nelson and Lewin, whose address in the 1917 edition of Boyd's Directory of the District of Columbia is listed as 1429 F Street, NW. The firm is not listed in subsequent directories and nothing is known about them. The building cost approximately \$5 million. The Hotel Washington opened its doors to guests in April of 1918, although construction was not completed until 1920.

Each of the original 360 guest rooms included a private bath with a combination tub and shower; circulating ice water, and; telephones with bathroom extensions. At least one hundred rooms were air-conditioned prior to 1940 and another hundred received the amenity that year. In addition to the grand lobby, public spaces included: a beauty parlor and barber shop; a ground-floor coffee shop; a roof top dining room; a deck for dancing and dining, lit by decorative iron lamps; a top-floor ballroom; and a restaurant and grille.

Management

Robert Strawbridge Downs, first president of the National Hotel Corporation, is generally credited as the guiding force behind the construction of the hotel. He also served as the hotel's first general manager. Downs, who was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1872 and educated at Baltimore City College, entered the hotel business as a young man and remained in it throughout his life. He moved to Washington in 1893 to work at the newly created Raleigh Hotel, but returned to Baltimore in 1903 to assume a position at the Stafford. In 1913 he returned to Washington to manage the Shoreham. He resigned from the Shoreham to supervise the construction of the Hotel Washington.

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While other hotel-owning corporations of the period, such as the Four-M and Wardman groups, distributed their efforts among several hostelryes, the National Hotel Corporation seems to have been content to concentrate solely on the Hotel Washington. Management and ownership have been remarkably stable throughout its existence, and the hotel has changed hands only once, when it was purchased in 1940 by the Tex-Wash Hotel Corporation (now called Gal-Tex), a family-controlled corporation owned by the Moody Foundation of Galveston, Texas. With 367 rooms and a limited amount of meeting space, the Hotel Washington was never intended as a convention hotel. The management has focused on quiet elegance, comfort, and impeccable service. Although the public areas have always been well appointed, the service exceptional, and the accommodations excellent, there seems to have been little effort to compete with other larger hotels such as the Mayflower, built in the early 1920s. There is no evidence of extensive advertising which was perhaps rendered unnecessary by the hotel's location, and management appeared on the whole content to rely on the word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat business of its affluent clientele.

Residents

The hotel's residential suites have accommodated numerous politically prominent and artistically noteworthy people. Vice President John Nance Garner lived at the hotel throughout his two terms of office (1933-1941) under Franklin D. Roosevelt. Congressman John W. McCormack, and Speaker of the House of Representatives during the Lyndon Johnson Administration, maintained an apartment throughout his 46 years of Congressional service; and Supreme Court Justice Frank Murphy resided there during his appointment on the bench (1940-1949). Each year he hosted a presidential birthday dinner at the hotel. In addition, the hotel housed as many as fifty members of the House of Representatives and five Senators in one congressional season.

With its proximity to the financial district, the hotel attracted businessmen. The brokerage firm of J. S. Bache and Company maintained an office on the first floor for many years, it was replaced by the Two Continents Restaurant. The International Monetary Fund Board of Directors held its first meeting at the Washington on May 8, 1946.

The presence of so many lawmakers and businessmen did not guarantee tranquility at the hotel. The hotel archives contain the reminiscences of Depression-era employees who had to deal with an irascible gun-toting Senator from South Carolina who was intent on shooting a night manager when room service was refused to him at 2:00 a.m. Moreover, Shriners celebrated the end of Prohibition by riding horses into the lobby and the 29th Division of the United States Army attempted to drive a jeep into the hotel for its 1949 reunion.

Entertainers appearing at nearby theaters also found the Hotel Washington a convenient place to live. A fifty-year employee of the hotel recalled that the entire cast of the Ziegfeld Follies once stayed there and rehearsed on the rooftop. The hotel's guest register has been studded with celebrity names: Will Rogers, John Wayne, Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey, George Burns, and Gracie Allen.

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The Hotel Washington is located at the corner of 15th Street, Pennsylvania Avenue
and F Street, N.W. on Lot 803 of Square 225 in Washington, D.C.